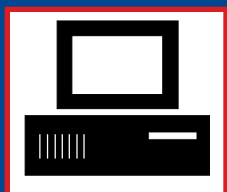


Information That Might Be Helpful to You

Constituent Service is a top priority for our office. If you are having a problem with a federal agency, want to express an opinion on a issue of importance to you, or need assistance obtaining flags, Washington tours, Presidential greetings or other federal information, please call on us. Additionally, I thought you might find the Federal publications described on this page both informative and useful. Call my office for a copy.



Parent's Guide to the Internet

Information on equipment and software, costs, surfing the internet, using e-mail and protecting your privacy. Lists online resources for parents and children.

Growing Up Drug-Free

Outlines what parents should know and can do to prevent or stop drug abuse at each age level.

Consumer Information Catalog

This catalog describes all of the consumer information book-lets available from the Federal Government.

Retirement Planning

There are several different guides available which provide advice and suggestions to strengthen your retirement savings.

2000 Calendars

I am pleased to make available the We the People year 2000 calendar. This historic millennium calendar features the work of leading photographers and rarely seen views of the Capitol and surrounding monuments. Call my office at 810-268-4444 while supplies last.



Congressman
Sander Levin



12th District Report

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12th District Report

A LEGISLATIVE & COMMUNITY UPDATE

Congressman Sandy Levin



Dear Friends:

Congress recently wrapped up its legislative business for this year. I am pleased to report that some important goals were achieved, including improvements in the Medicare program and funding to get 100,000 new teachers in our nation's classrooms and 50,000 additional police officers on the streets of our communities.

I regret that we did not see action on managed care reform, campaign finance reform and prescription drug benefits to name a few outstanding issues.

This newsletter provides a year-end review of the major legislative issues and community activities in which I have been most involved. Also included is information on a number of consumer publications that I hope you'll find useful.

The Congress will re-convene at the end of January. I hope you will be in touch to express your views on the issues in this newsletter or others of concern to you. You can reach me through our District office at 810-268-4444 or at slevin@mail.house.gov

Sincerely,

Sandy

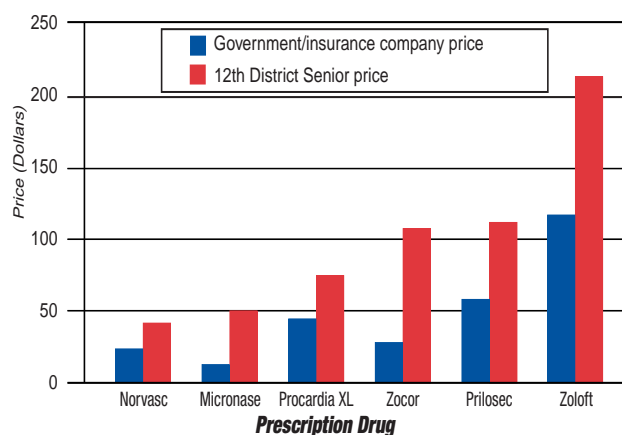
Reining in Prescription Drug Costs

One of my priorities this year has been to expand seniors' access to affordable prescription drugs. This issue deserves attention as prescription drugs are the single largest out-of-pocket cost to the elderly for health services. According to a 1998 *Wall Street Journal* survey, 80% of retirees use a prescription drug every day.

I recently requested a study to find out exactly how much seniors in my Congressional district pay for their medications. The results were startling: *Seniors in the 12th District have to pay more than twice as much as an insurance company would pay for the same medications.* This is because insurance companies and other large purchasers get bulk discounts which allow them to buy

See [Reining in Prescription Drug Costs](#)
continued on page 6

Prices Paid for One Month of Medication



Preserve Social Security—Pay Down Debt

Here's an interesting fact: Social Security is the single largest item in the national budget; indeed, in 1998 the federal government paid out a total of \$379 billion to Social Security beneficiaries. The second largest category of federal spending is national defense, weighing in at about \$270 billion a year. *Guess which federal program comes in 3rd place?* When I raise this question at town meetings, I usually hear answers like education, Medicare or veterans benefits.

Actually, the 3rd largest category of federal spending goes to

make interest payments on the nation's \$3.7 trillion public debt. In 1998 alone, interest spending on the debt was a whopping \$243 billion!

Where did all this debt come from and what is Congress doing about it? Between 1982 and 1997, under Republican and Democrat presidents alike, the federal debt more than quadrupled from \$785 billion in 1981 to more than \$3.7 trillion in 1997. In 1992 alone, the federal government ran a deficit of \$290 billion.

This started to turn around in 1993 when Congress and the

President began to take action to stem the flow of red ink. Aided by the strong economy, the Deficit Reduction Act of 1993 and the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 helped turned decades of budget deficits into budget surpluses. As a result, the government has actually posted modest surpluses for the last two years. If we stay on this road, these surpluses are projected to continue until about 2011, after which time government outlays for Social Security and Medicare are expected to increase dramatically as the Baby Boom generation begins to retire.

See ***Preserve Social Security***
continued on page 6

Campaign Finance Reform Passes House

For the second year in a row, the House of Representatives approved meaningful campaign finance reform, only to see it blocked by a handful of Senators.

I have fought for passage of campaign finance reform for the last two sessions. This year, I made the following floor statement focused on the problem of so called "issue ads" which allows political parties to run negative advertisements attacking a candidate by name without being subject to the same disclosure requirements as other federal campaign expenditures.

"Twenty years ago the main problem was unlimited individual contributions going for undisguised campaign ads. Today the problem is different. It is unlimited contribu-

tions from individuals and groups going for campaign ads that are described transparently as issue ads."

"Because that one word [defeat] is left out, although the whole atmosphere of that ad is a campaign ad, it falls outside of Federal regulations. Games played with language using the word 'tell' instead of the word 'defeat' should not thwart the law."

"No one is accusing the opponents of Shays-Meehan of being corrupt. They are defending a corrupt system. Sure the public does not run and say to us, 'Vote for Shays-Meehan.' And one reason is because they are cynical that this Congress will ever act. It is time for us to respond to that cynicism. It is time for us to act." ■

Did you Know?

- 57% of children under 6 in Michigan have two working parents.
- The annual cost of licensed child care in Michigan averages \$5000 per child.
- One out of every four parents say that their child care is not as good as they would like it to be.
- Three fifths of families surveyed are not sure their current child care arrangements will be in place 6 months from now.

The federal government should do more to help families obtain quality child care. I'd like to hear from you about what you feel would be a useful role for the federal government.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR STUDENTS

Local Students Attend DC “Voices Against Violence” Conference

Hosted four outstanding students from our area at the “Voices Against Violence” conference sponsored by Minority Leader Gephardt.

Amy May, a senior at Center Line High School, Christen Thomas, a junior at Cousino High School, Marilyn Bray, a senior at Ferndale High School, and Katie Ogden, a junior at Berkley High School joined hundreds of students at this leadership conference.

The students discussed the problem of youth violence and possible solutions. They worked with

Members and senior staff as they drafted a House of Representatives Resolution which has since been introduced by Rep. Gephardt and co-sponsored by myself and 112 other Members of Congress. They also worked to develop action plans they could implement at home.

I was extremely proud of our student participants. Christen Thomas told me, “I want to be there for other students and show them a bright future.” Amy May expressed, “even if there is just one or two (violent) incidents, they don’t have to happen.” Katie

Ogden said that the conference has “given me a lot of ideas to take back home.” She also had her own ideas, “some sort of diversity program should be in place in every school so that we can learn about each other’s cultures and backgrounds.” Marilyn Bray told me she found it useful to hear what other people around the country are doing to solve the problem. Amy summed up the hopes of all of our student representatives, “By being here, maybe I can make sure those problems (violence and guns) don’t start in the future.” ■

A Letter Home from a 12th District Cadet

Each year I am pleased to recommend local high school students to our nation’s Military Academies. The following is an excerpt from a letter I received from Robert E. Bailey III, one of our 1998 nominees to the United States Air Force Academy.

“... A typical day for me begins at the break of dawn ... the entire cadet wing usually marches to breakfast, where they eat with their individual squadrons (the four-degrees must eat at attention of course). Ten academic classes run from 7:30 to 3:30, with lunch sometime in between. Intercollegiate practice, intramural, or clubs usually run after school until about 6 or 7.

“The fourth class cadets are required to study military knowledge in the form of quotes, statistics, people, planes, and various other things. Endless hours of studying usually take place after 7:30 p.m.. At around 11:00 we usually go to sleep, only to awake the next morning to repeat the process all over again.

“The Academy is a very difficult institution to get through. Throughout the course of one’s life here, he or she finds many hard-

ships; many peaks and valleys; many mountains to be climbed and many new stones to be overturned. One can very rarely go a few days without finding a wall blocking the path. Yet, it is these obstacles that must be overcome in order to build one’s strength, honor, and internal character. It gives me great pride to be a part of this fine institution and the class of 2003.” ■

Paul Lee Serves as Congressional Page

This fall I was pleased to host Paul Lee as a Congressional Page. Pages live together in a dorm and take classes together. But their real job in Washington is to manage the message and delivery service among House offices and the House Floor.

Paul, pictured here with Rep. Levin, lives in Troy and is a junior at Athens High School.



Congress Approves 12 Town Drain Funds

The water pollution problems afflicting Lake St. Clair underscore the need to seek regional solutions to regional problems. When pollution closes beaches to swimmers, it is not just a problem for Macomb County or the Twelve Town Communities of Oakland County. It is a regional problem. Solving it will require the combined resources of all levels of government: federal, state, county and local.

Anti-Drug Coalition Contacts

Macomb Zero Tolerance

(Macomb County-wide)
Ken Lampar
(810) 469-5683

Coalition of Healthy Communities

(Oakland County-wide)
Mary Ann Solberg
(248) 740-0431

SE Oakland (Ferndale, Royal Twp, Hazel Park)
Cheryl Perkins
(248) 544-7350

Clawson

Kathy Phillips
(248) 740-0431

Royal Oak

Diane Dovico
(248) 740-0431

Troy

Mary Ann Solberg
(248) 740-0431

Southfield

Susan Cruevas
(248) 827-0660

Tri-Community (Berkley, Oak Park, Huntington Woods)

Linda Bailey
(248) 691-7478

Warren

John Iras
(810) 294-8430

UCAT (Utica, Sterling Heights, Shelby Twp)

Kim Wiegand
(810) 979-1293

Fourteen communities in Oakland County are confronted with the difficult necessity of spending \$130 million to upgrade the Twelve Towns Drain, which has been identified as a contributor of pollutants that have resulted in the repeated beach closings on Lake St. Clair. Attempting to fund the entire upgrade project on their own would place a tremendous financial burden on the residents of these communities.

Last April, I went to the House Appropriations Committee and requested that Congress contribute to the effort to upgrade the Twelve Towns Drain. Working with Representative Joe Knollenberg and Senator Carl Levin, we suc-

ceeded in winning a special \$1.5 million federal contribution for the Twelve Towns Drain.

The funding that Congress approved for Twelve Towns is a good start. While I had requested more funds, \$1.5 million is a foot in the door and I intend to seek additional money for Twelve Towns next year. Congress also included \$885 million in additional funding for the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, which Congress established in 1988. The SRF funds are administered by the states and provide low-interest loans to communities to build or improve sewage treatment systems. The Twelve Town Drain is applying for SRF funds. ■

Fighting the War on Drugs

Local Anti-Drug Coalitions Lead Effort

The 12th Congressional District has played a critical role in the national fight against substance abuse. Several years ago, working with local anti-drug community coalitions, I co-authored legislation to support their efforts and spread their experience to other communities.

Two local drug-fighting organizations, Macomb County Zero Tolerance and the Coalition of Healthy Communities in Oakland County received grants totaling almost \$200,000 to further their work.

Coalitions in our area are very active. In Macomb County, students are creating Public Service Announcements to promote a tobacco and alcohol-free lifestyle. The Troy Coalition recently hosted a forum for students and community leaders to talk frankly about a number of problems youth face today as well as possible solutions, and the Southeast Oakland Coalition hosted an organizing meeting of 400 residents at their Family Fun night. My office publishes a newsletter outlining the activities of the area coalitions. If you would like to receive it, contact my office at 810-268-4444 and ask to be put on the "Coalition Edition" mailing list. ■

See **Fighting the War on Drugs** continued on page 6

Working to Prevent Youth Violence

The tragic incidents in our nation's schools this year have touched all of our families. At first you worry about your own kids and grandkids, and then you begin to consider what this increasing level of violence means about our society and for our future.

The problem of youth violence is a complex one and the answers are not simple or automatic. I was appointed to the House Bi-partisan

Working Group on Youth Violence consisting of 12 Democrats and 12 Republicans. We worked together each week this fall to identify causes of youth violence and build consensus on a potential response from the federal government.

What seemed important to most of the group during these deliberations was the need for a multi-faceted approach to deal with the problem of youth violence. The

group concluded that early prevention and intervention are essential to reducing youth violence and agreed that access to childhood health programs and mental health services must be increased.

I will continue my efforts on this issue when Congress re-convenes. If you have specific thoughts or suggestions on this issue, please contact me during these next weeks. ■

12th District Awarded \$ 4.7 Million in COPS Grant Money Since 1995

Law Enforcement Officials throughout the 12th Congressional District played an important role in shaping the 1994 Anti-Crime Bill. Based on numerous meetings with Chiefs of Police, I worked in Washington to ensure that the community policing law was flexible enough to support the multi-jurisdictional task forces which are so effective in fighting crime in suburban Oakland and Macomb counties.

We are now seeing the results of these efforts in our communities. To date, we have added over 71 community police officers to our local communities. We have also formed a new multi-jurisdictional task force: the Southeast Oakland Crime Suppression Task

Force, which supports the efforts of several police departments and made 120 arrests in 1998. In addition, earlier this year a consortium of 44 police agencies in Oakland County received over \$17 million in COPS grant money. This money is used for technology to local departments; including laptop computers, digitized mug-shot and live-scan fingerprint systems, crime analysis software and enhancements

to a regional county-wide database.

In addition to the community policing program, two communities (Ferndale and Center Line) have received a "COPS in Schools" grant. These funds are used to hire a school liaison officer to provide enhanced security and more interaction with our students. I was also pleased to assist Warren's 37th District Court in receiving a \$380,000 grant from the Department of Justice to establish a local drug court.



Rep. Levin and local law enforcement demonstrate crime-fighting technology funded through a COPS grant for Attorney General Janet Reno.

Reining in Prescription Drug Costs

continued from page 1

drugs at a much lower cost than people who buy them on their own. For example, Zocor—a drug many seniors take to lower their cholesterol levels—costs insurance companies about \$54 for a month's supply. But seniors pay nearly 300 percent more, or \$215 for a one month's supply.

This is not an isolated example of the financial burden seniors are carrying in order to fill the prescriptions their doctors write for them. More than half of all senior citizens have high blood pressure. A month's supply of Norvasc—a commonly prescribed blood pressure medicine—costs \$40, or more than a dollar a day. Still others battle clinical depression. A month's supply of Zoloft, which many peo-

Fighting the War on Drugs

continued from page 4

I am convinced that the best way to tackle the drug problem is through a broad-based approach that targets the problem from every possible angle—prevention, interdiction and punishment. At home, coalitions of parents, teachers, students, health care providers, government officials, law enforcement officials, business and religious leaders and others are making a difference.

I hope you will take advantage of the contact information provided on page 4 to become more involved with the community anti-drug coalition in your area. ■

ple take to control depression, was \$216. Procardia XL, which helps prevent heart attacks, costs \$65 for a month's supply.

I believe the solution to this problem is to add the prescription drugs seniors need the most to Medicare's benefit package. That way the government can buy in bulk and save money, and seniors can get the medicine they need. Providing a drug benefit of this kind could actually save Medicare money in the long run. There will be the marked decrease in costly hospitalizations, which can be avoided when Medicare beneficiaries suffering from these chronic illnesses have access to the medications that keep their diseases under control. More importantly, access to these medications will significantly improve the quality of life of senior citizens across the country.

Last spring I joined other concerned House members in introducing "The Medicare Chronic Disease Prescription Drug Benefit Act," which would require Medicare to cover the medications needed to treat the five most common chronic diseases among Medicare recipients. I think this would be a good first step toward better health for seniors and better cost management for Medicare. The Republican Majority has so far been reluctant to consider prescription drug legislation, but I will continue to press this issue when Congress reconvenes in January. ■

Preserve Social Security—Pay Down Debt

continued from page 2

The debate in Congress this year has centered around what to do now that we're no longer running large budget deficits. Some say it's time for a large tax cut. Others say we should increase spending. My own view is that we should hold the line for now on either large tax cuts or major new spending initiatives and use the budget surplus to pay down the nation's debt.

I recently cosponsored legislation that would rope off most of the budget surplus to pay down publicly-held debt and use the resulting interest savings to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. Under this proposal, the entire publicly-held debt would be eliminated by 2015. As the federal debt is retired, the government will save hundreds of billions of dollars in borrowing costs. This money would instead be credited to Social Security and Medicare, extending the financial solvency of both these vital programs.

The other benefit of paying down the debt is its impact on consumers. When the federal government borrows less, interest rates fall. This decline not only lowers the cost of capital to businesses; it also makes it cheaper for people to borrow money to purchase homes, buy cars and send children to college. ■

Continuing to Fight for HMO Reform

Our families deserve health care that is both affordable and accessible. I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 2723, the bipartisan *Patients' Bill of Rights* legislation. This bill, which was introduced by Representatives John Dingell (D-MI) and Charlie Norwood (R-GA), responds to widespread concerns about health care quality in our country by guaranteeing basic rights to health care consumers.

The Dingell/Norwood bill would ensure that medical decisions are made by patients and their doctors, not insurance company bureaucrats. It guarantees patients' rights to see their own doctor, to have access to the nearest emergency room, to be able to see a specialist when necessary, to appeal a health care decision with which they disagree, and the right to hold HMOs accountable through lawsuits if necessary.

The House of Representatives approved the Dingell/Norwood bill on October 7 by a vote of 275 to

151. The Senate has approved a weaker version of this legislation. A conference committee has been appointed to reconcile differences between the House- and Senate-passed bills.

Unfortunately, final action on HMO reform is being held up by the Republican Leadership of Congress. Despite the fact that a majority of the House clearly supports H.R. 2723, House Speaker Hastert has resorted to parliamentary procedures to derail the bill. For example, all but one of the Republican members selected to represent the views of the House in negotiations with the Senate *actually voted against managed care reform*.

Ultimately, these cynical efforts to water down HMO reform will not succeed. The vast majority of the American people believe that medical decisions should be made by doctors and patients, not by insurance companies. I believe this view will ultimately prevail. ■

Trade that Benefits U.S. Workers and Businesses

As the ranking Democrat on the Trade Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, I am fighting to ensure that the rules of competition for international trade are fair to U.S. workers and businesses.

Trade is an important part of our nation's economic engine. Exports support the jobs of 11.6 million Americans, including one in five U.S. manufacturing jobs. An increasingly global

economy means increased export opportunities for U.S. products.

It also means increased competition. Trade is different today than it was a decade ago. More and more of our trade is now with developing countries with far lower labor costs and in most cases tight control over labor markets, including direct involvement by the government in the determination of wages and the absence of a meaningful right for workers to organize and bargain for increased wages.

I believe that trade agreements have to establish ground rules so that the benefits of trade are spread more evenly. If the rules allow developing nations to continue artificially suppressing wages, it will encourage downward pressure on wages and salaries in the United States, a persistently wide gap in labor costs between rich and poor nations, and the absence in Third World nations of a growing middle class that has a stake in democratic government and free markets.

